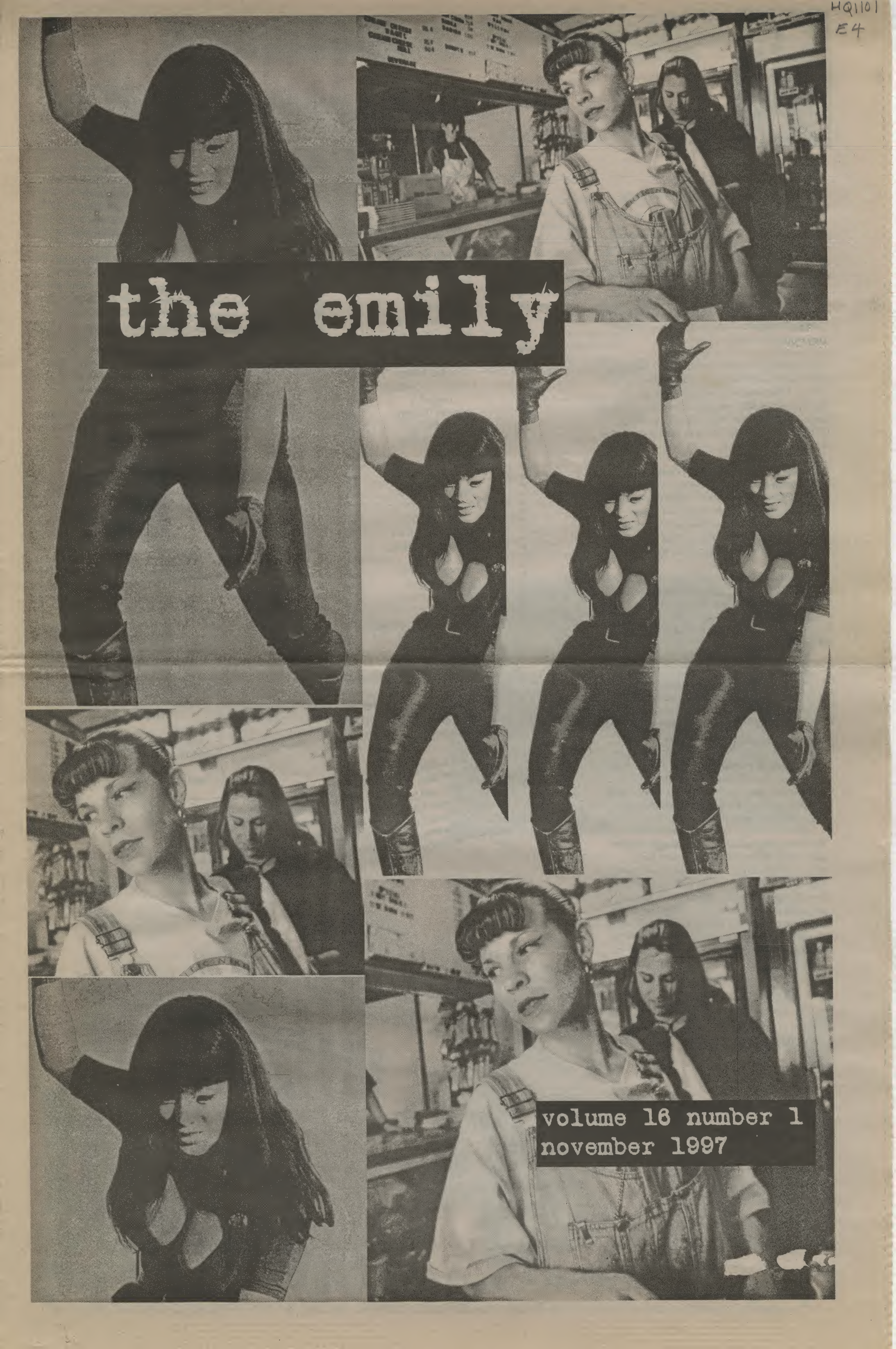


HQ1101  
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# the emily

volume 16 number 1  
november 1997





# welcome to the dollhouse two

Welcome to the first paper by this year's Emily collective!

The theme for this issue is "Women as Survivors". Some women like the label "survivor" as a step up from "victim". It refers more to our actions, coping skills, tenacity and hope than to the circumstances we've endured, but don't necessarily want to be identified by. Some find "survivor" limiting, with an implication that our lives are a joyless grind with nothing to celebrate. Some would rather "thrive" than simply "survive".

We live through experiences which may damage us in our bodies, our spirits, our ability to feel, and the way we think about ourselves and the world. We survive until we have enough safety and resources to evaluate the behaviors which have got us this far, deciding which to keep, which to modify and which to ditch.

Survival is an issue for women's organizations, too. Everywoman's Books is closing this month, after 23 years in Victoria. The Women's Creative Network/g-spot has an ongoing membership drive to help maintain a club for women. The Emily is struggling this year, with both UVSS funding and work study positions cut by half from last year's budget.

We're a new collective this year, and learning as we go, so please bear with us as we figure things out and start updating the paper. We'd like to thank everyone who submitted material. There was enough to fill about three issues, and a lot of great work didn't get printed.

Getting beyond survival and into thriving as a voice for women at UVic is something the Emily collective has been talking a lot about. Besides dealing with this year's cuts, we'd like to redress previous years' cuts. The Emily has had a circulation of 2000

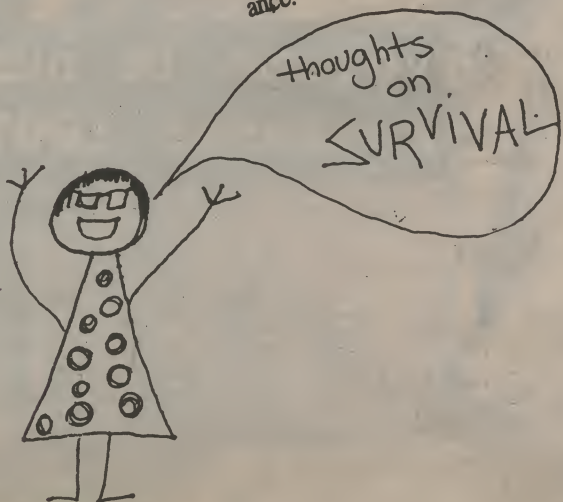
for the past couple of years. We'd like to bring it back up to its former 5000 copies. We want to be more vibrant, more interactive, more "90's", more representative of all women on campus. We want more humour, more insight, more art, more celebration in our pages. We need you to help us be what you want from a women's paper.

You'll be seeing info on campus through the year about Emily fundraisers and upcoming Emily themes and deadlines. Any woman is welcome to come to our meetings, join the collective, help out on production weekends, submit text or graphics, or give us feedback on how we're doing. You can get involved as much or as little as you want. We are a place where women's voices can be heard, and we want to hear from you!

-Alison Anderson

survivor...of colonization...i was not meant to exist. one side of my cultural heritage attempted to annihilate the other. my family was supposed to assimilate, integrate. little did they know we have a long history of resistance and spiritual/physical/mental strength. i am a survivor and i continue to fight everyday for my voice, for my reality to be acknowledged...a mixed-blood woman. survivor of daily systemic racism. alcoholism. cultural genocide. displacement from our traditional territories. they took our masks our rattles our babies. they tried to take me, but here i am writing these words. resisting.

surviving ... insults, degradation, belittlement, scorn, hatred, torture, name-calling, domination, and after all this ... beaming, loving, sharing and accepting.



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Alison Anderson  
Nicole Verkerk

## Contributors

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## Amazing Cover design

Lyndsay Sung

Our meeting times are currently alternate Tuesdays @ 1230 and Thursdays @ 330, in the Women's Centre, room b107 in the SUB. Changes will be posted in the Women's Centre, on the big calendar and/or in the red Emily binder.

Healing is holding yourself together, letting your belly go, drop and roll into the river rumbling, flying downstream and everything is green and blue and you are happy and here. Learning to walk without minding, thousand seams on skin. To walk naked, to feel the wind blow through you, pick up ashes and blow you clean and empty-full of stillness. To laugh and feel your elbows cry, like eyes and onions, to allow everything to rest, each piece a candy in a loot bag, you-- one and many, moving everywhere, threaded together and exploring.

if you are reading this, then you have picked up a copy of the new and improved emily. we've been working hard over the past month to encourage lots of new contributors and collective members, and have been thinking of ways to make this year's emily smart and sassy.

i am one of the two new editors this year. when i think of survival i am forced to think of the survival of this paper, funding for both my work study position, and the paper overall, was cut dramatically. now not only does the emily collective have to put out a paper without a lot of money, we also have to spend a lot of energy fundraising. i wasn't happy. at first, with the whole notion of an issue about survivors. a lot of the time it seems like a powerless word, and most women i know don't go around labelling themselves "survivors". as we began to brainstorm about different kinds of survival, i realized the word had many different meanings, and survivor can be a powerful label. so, dear reader, you, too can help the emily survive. we are always loving new collective members, new ideas for fundraising, and new contributors, our vision for the emily is a fun one, so always feel welcome to come and help out

-nicole



## Womyn's Centre

Ways that all womyn can participate:

Dec 6th Memorial volunteer  
Co-ordinating Collective  
Library committee  
Organizational development  
Policy development  
International womyn's week  
Eating disorders week  
The Emily

The Womyn's Centre is located in the Sub B107

Come in, stop by, check it out.





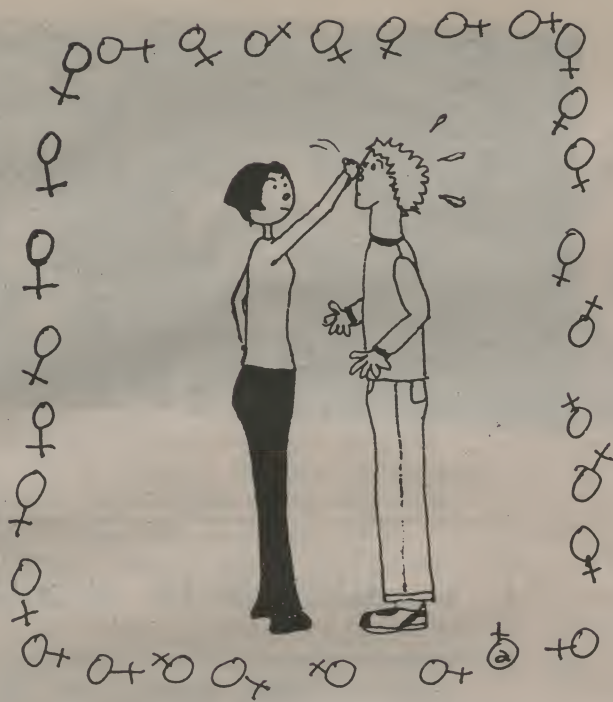
## How to Break a Nose and Other Stories...

Walking across the parking lot in the early evening one hand wedged deep within your pocket, the other carrying your keys between your fingers in a makeshift brass-knuckle... *Is this you?* We've all been there at one time or another, whether you've done the keys-between-the-fingers thing or borrowed your roommate's car rather than walk to the show. Over the years, I've tried various ways of protecting myself. Before I moved to a dodgy area of Victoria, I tried to feel confident in my own lung and leg power. Then, walking home from work one night down a back alley, complete with terrible growling repairshop dogs, I realized that this was probably not the safest place for me to be. I invested in some pepper spray. This gave me confidence for a while until I began to wonder if I'd get it out of my backpack in time... Then my mom gave me a deluxe 'personal alarm', complete with built-in flashlight and motion detector. This one didn't last long. The first time I set it off (accidentally) was in a crowded cafe. OOPS. Then came the Toys R Us episode (I made children cry). Or the time I was coming in late at night and promptly woke up my roommates with a hideous siren coming from my

bag. I finally decided (much to everyone's relief) that the flimsy 'on' switch wasn't quite serving my purposes. So what's a girl to do? Well, I finally took a self-defense course for women, and I'd highly recommend doing so. Most are quite cheap and convenient and you learn how to break a man's nose and other cool tricks. I learned a lot of useful stuff and left feeling rather empowered. But the main thing was that it gave me confidence in my own abilities. Men who assault women, whether strangers or your date, are looking for a victim. They aren't expecting an opponent.

-Andrea Bellamy

Campus Security offers R.A.D. (Rape Aggression Defense) on an ongoing basis. Contact Campus Security to register. Cost is a mere \$15.00 for students.



## TBTN vancouver style

Despite the rain, I found myself in Vancouver along side of 4,000 other women on the night of September 27th. I had never participated in a Take Back the Night protest before and decided that volunteering as a safety-woman would be a great introduction. I was among 200 other safety women, all of us wearing neon bibs decorated with the woman symbol. We were in charge of protecting the marchers from traffic and making sure that men did not puncture the inner circle of the march. This changed my experience, as I was on guard the whole time - apart from one confrontation at the beginning of the march, there were no problems. I recommend getting involved. I felt that by giving my protection I helped prove that when women stand together, their presence is powerful. The event was colourful, loud, and empowering. There was a woman dressed in a wedding gown and backpack, a group of stilt walkers, and fire-jugglers. Beyond theatrics, there were inspiring speeches by various Vancouver women's rights activists. As we marched along the downtown streets of Vancouver, we chanted "HEY MISTER! GET OFF MY SISTER!" and inspired other women to join in. I noticed a mother and daughter join, and overheard the mother tell her ten-year-old daughter that this would be her first protest but not her last. It won't be mine either.

-Ginger Warden

## Take Back the Night

Take Back The Night!

Saturday September 27th was the night of the annual Take Back the Night rally. Approximately 250 women and children showed up at Centennial square to listen to speakers, and then march their way down to the Parliament buildings where there were more speakers.

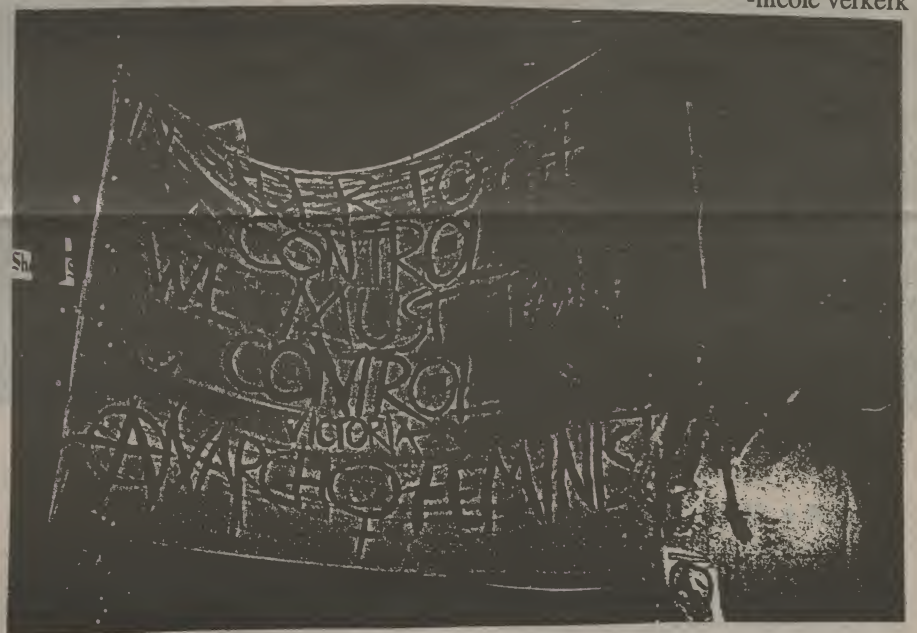
This was my second Take Back the Night. Despite the fact that only half as many women showed up as last year, there was still a lot of enthusiasm and I was still forced into heated debates about the merits of the women-only policy.

Take Back the Night is about women taking over the streets. Doing it without the help of men. For one night it is not about men at all. I didn't spend any time hating men as is often misperceived, instead I thought about being a women walking the streets. I witnessed debates with men who insisted that it was their "right" to be there, and that they "loved" women. In solidarity they were asked to stand on the sidelines and cheer us on, but giving back the night proved too hard for some.

As I walked down Douglas Street I was left with only one question. Something that really bothered me. Here I was standing under the Anarcha-feminist sign, and guess who was right in front of me? The police. Here we are "taking" back the night, being helped by the police. I didn't feel safe because the police were around, they are responsible for a lot of violence. And it sure didn't feel like we were storming the streets. A bicycle cop kept on telling me to stay within the white lines. It's hard to feel empowered when the police, instead of the women, are making their way through the streets.

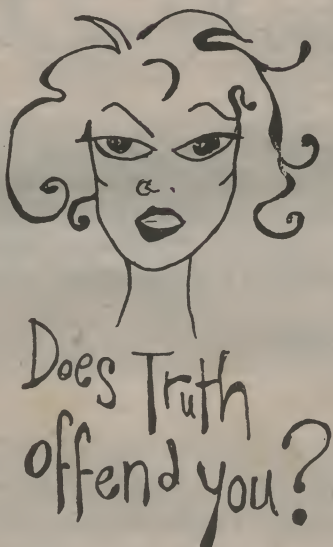
There were a lot of good things about the march though. The speakers were all very informative, albeit frightening. There is so much violence that not even a portion of it was elaborated on. As well, the planning committee mentioned a new route that the march might take next year, which includes stopping at historical sights of violence. I just hope that next year the march is unmarshalled, so we really are given the chance to Take Back the Night.

-nicole verkerk



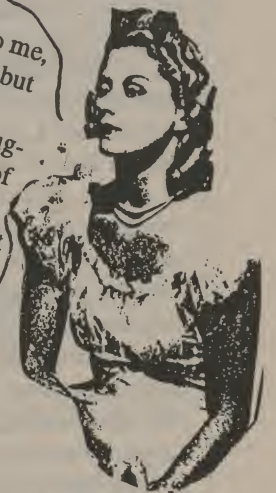
Actual production weekend conversation by andrea → and nicole ↓

Oh, I'm Sorry.



I don't want to be a survivor. To me, 'survivor' implies victimization, but still I am forced to admit that I struggle for physical survival: struggling against the crushing weight of poverty, finding a bed for the night and worrying about food for the next day. I have also struggled for emotional survival: surviving sexual abuse, rape and the inate social inequities which aim to keep me down.

yeah, but you still fucking kick ass. just tell 'em all to eat shit!







## women's centre library update

the past two months have been very exciting for me, as i began the process of transforming the chaotic and unorganized women's centre library into a functioning, accessible, rich resource centre. i, along with a small collective of women, will be continuing this process over the coming year and hope to see many more women making use of this space in the future. to date, we have purchased many new books for the library, from everywoman's books, with a focus on hard-to-find material. some of the sections we focused on were writing by women of colour, queer women, aboriginal women and jewish women. very exciting! as well, the library is now wheelchair accessible, as we got rid of the huge table blocking the doorway. we now have staffed hours in which you can drop by and check out our new selection of books, chat with the friendly staff, or become a member of the library committee yourself. hours of operation are posted on the library door, so please check it out. we are still in the process of organizing the filing system, developing new categories to make it easier to find what you are looking for. be on the lookout for further updates, as we move slowly along the road to becoming organized. and if you have any suggestions of good women-focused books or zines the library should buy, drop by when we are open and tell us about them.

-sarah hunt  
library coordinator



## silence is violence

Silence is Violence. A catchy slogan that is often seen on placards at Take Back the Night marches, in relation to rape and other issues of violence against women. But what does this abstraction mean?

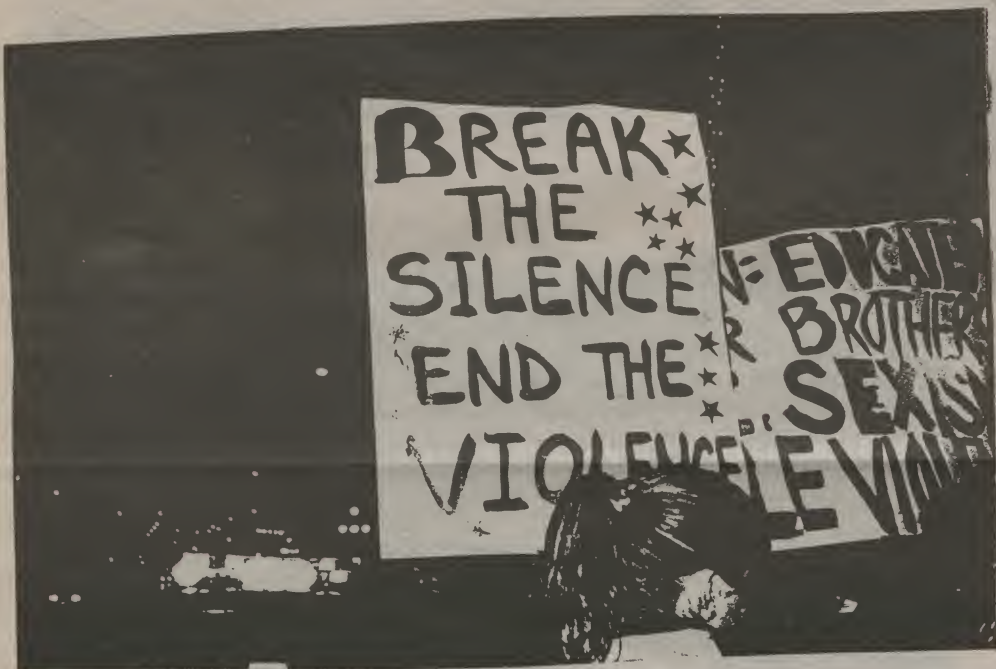
It is the way you can't say what he did to you when you were six and had no idea that what was happening was wrong. It is this shame, that invisible fist that covers your mouth and says "Don't talk about *that*". Even now as I write this I see ex-lovers, friends, relatives saying, *Not this subject again*, as though I want to write about cliches again and again, trying to touch that unreachable voice, trying to find where he put it when he took it from me and you know, I'm tired of writing it, breathing it, searching it for some sort of answer to the equally cliché question: *why?* I hate that sexual abuse is a cliché. I don't need to feel that I can't submit this to a campus paper because I don't want my peers to read it. I hate that I see people from my grade ten writing class saying *she's still writing about that?* It doesn't just go away like a virus. There's a scar.

Childhood sexual abuse causes so much damage to a person's life. One woman in an excellent book, *The Courage to Heal* by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis, wrote "As far as I'm concerned my life was stolen from me. I didn't get to be who I could have been." "Get over it." "Move on and let go." "Forgive and forget." Another cliché anyone? I'm tired of these responses. And I'm tired of pity, of drama, of the distance it can create between friends. We're not victims, we're survivors and we're everywhere.

To the people who have friends who are dealing with childhood sexual abuse, please don't offer advice. Please don't share stories of women who "are worse off". You don't understand. Even if you were sexually abused, your reality is different to that of your friend. No one dealing with this needs to feel like she's making a big deal over nothing. No one dealing with this needs to be told to "move on". Moving on is suppressing, and is damaging. Please tell your friend you love her (or him) and support her. That's all she needs to hear.

If we don't create a safe environment for women to speak out, the silence will continue and so will the abuse.

-Lisa h.



### I AM A SURVIVOR BECAUSE GOD WON'T LET ME DIE...

STRANGER: Why do you wear black all the time? Are ya depressed or somethin'? You look like you're at a funeral.

ME: Yeah! I'm depressed and I wanna die!

STRANGER: You should smile...it'll make you feel better.

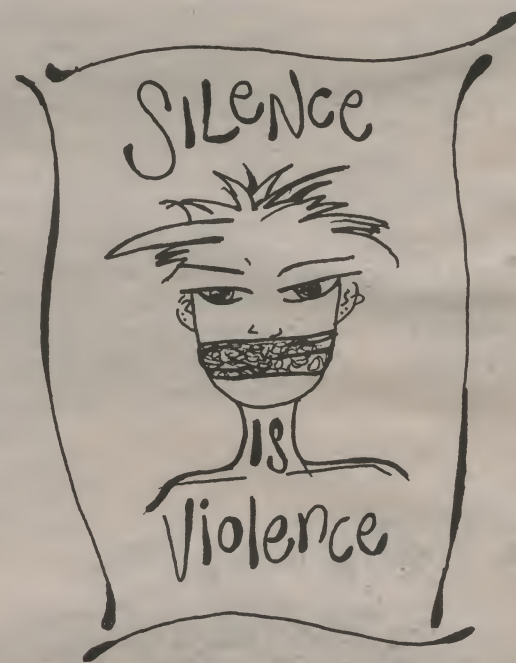
Yes, I am the girl that strangers walk up to and comment on my lack of perkiness. I am a survivor of clinical depression because God won't let me die. It's been three years since I have been diagnosed with this 'complicated' (hard to treat) illness. I have a double depression — an underlying perpetual low grade depression that is sometimes coupled with bouts of major depression. I live every day with the knowledge that my life could collapse tomorrow and I won't be able to think happy thoughts, click my heels and snap out of it. The combination of a chemical imbalance, psychological factors and environmental stressors makes it impossible to talk oneself out of a depression once you've fallen into the abyss. There is no "gettin' your poop in a scoop" going on — it is hard enough to breathe let alone shovel any shit.

So I spend my days enjoying the little pleasures I find along the way, establishing support networks and closely monitoring any fluctua-

tions in my moods. When I detect the tip of the iceberg, I forgive myself all the things I cannot handle and adjust my attitude accordingly. Forgiving yourself for your inability to deal and cope with petty problems, situations, etc. that you've handled a million times before is the hardest task in self love. And since my life depends on flexibility and adaptation, forgiveness is a lesson I have been forced to learn and re-learn.

I am a survivor of depression because God won't let me die but learning to live is my own responsibility. In the end, I am the only one who must love myself enough to forgive my flaws and periods of vulnerability so I can enjoy the ride. God didn't let me die not because God wanted me to suffer more...God didn't let me die so I could learn to live in spite of my suffering. Gee thanks big guy...I owe you one.

-SHEHANI KAY  
is a depressed transfer student who is currently trying to enjoy the ride.



In both individual and collective healing, speaking out is vital. It is the courageous act of breaking out of secrecy, privacy, and shame to contact others suffering similar pain that eventually leads to an understanding of the root causes of the pain. Speaking out becomes a collective movement, opening a role for writers, singers, artists, and historical researchers.

- Anne Bishop

Power can be seen as power with rather than power over and it can be used for competence and co-operation, rather than dominance and control.

-Anne L. Barstow





## goodbye everywomans

Everywomans Books, a well-loved part of Victoria's women's community for the past 22 years, is closing its doors on November 22. A collectively-run and owned feminist bookstore, it is the last of its kind in Canada and possibly North America. The store carries hard-to-find literature, with sections devoted to writing by lesbians / bisexuals, women of color, and aboriginal women. As well, there are books about the politics of reproduction, spirituality, eco-feminism, and much more. Over approximately the past four years, the bookstore collective has had difficulty making ends meet due to the rising price of books, and the influx of large corporate-owned and run bookstores that have gender studies and women's studies sections. Over the previous six months, the Everywomans Books collective sought solutions to the financial problems and made every attempt to keep the store afloat. However, it seems that in the end the store does not have enough monetary support from the women's community to stay in business and is being forced to close.

As a member of Everywomans Books collective, I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful and inspiring women both in the collective and the larger Victoria community. As well, many women from out of town come to the store to access the many wonderful books and magazines that are difficult to find elsewhere, as well as to chat and find a good place to eat, or hotel to stay in. The past year and a half that I have spent with the collective has provided me with an opportunity to put my feminism in to action. The bookstore provides a place where women can buy books without supporting a multinational corporation and can feel good in knowing that their money is going back into running the store. No single person benefits from the proceeds of the sales at Everywomans Books - all women in the community benefit. I will sadly miss my shifts at the bookstore and hope that another group of women find it necessary to start their own bookstore collective, because I have seen the despair in women's eyes when they realize that there will no longer be a comfortable place to sit for an hour and read a book on lesbian politics without feeling the glare of video cameras and the pressure to purchase.

-Sarah Hunt

Currently, all stock is on sale 50-70% off! And a final reading and farewell party is being held on November 28 at the David Lam Auditorium. Persimmon Blackbridge, Sheila Norgate, and Sheila Baxter will be reading from their new books. Please come out for this final feminist celebration.

WE LUF  
IT!

## g marks the spot

You may have heard of a little place called the G Spot before. Perhaps you've read an article about it, seen the name around, or heard about it in passing. If you haven't had the opportunity to go there yet, what the heck are you waiting for? A personal invitation? Well, this is it.

I would like every one of you womyn out there to drop by and check this place out. It ain't nothin' but a G thang, baby. You can pick up an info calendar in the women's centre and plan your visit. If you like it there, you may be interested in a membership. There are now over 220 of those little card carrying members out there. You could be one too.

This fine little club has been around for over a year and in order for it to stay it needs your support and love (a little cash wouldn't hurt either). The Spot holds various events throughout the week, things like Yoga and Comfy Cozy nights with soup and movies. It's also a place to meet other women and relax on a couch in the comfy upper lounge, or head downstairs to dance up a storm. Put those dance moves you've been practising in your bedroom to good use. Maybe you and your friends have a little routine you'd like to show in a comfortable environment before you hit the big club scene with it.

The G Spot is also a place where you can volunteer, by acting as a DJ, bartending, or helping with fundraising efforts.

The bottom line here, ladies, is that you should check this place out, meet some new people, and have a beverage for me. The G Spot is located at 1910 Store Street (near Value Village for all you bargain hunters). It's more fun than a barrel of monkeys on crack.

-mookie wilson



War is not a metaphor. Our fight is simply not broadcast on the 5 o'clock news because an important part of our genocide is the myth that we have all vanished into cupboards or are happy somewhere selling crafts to tourists. We are not allowed designated victim status because that would admit to the worst instance of mass murder in world history. Our invisibility is woven deeply into the shame of history.

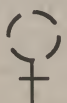
-Chrystos, in "Gathering Words"

Call for ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS

for Montreal Massacre  
Memorial coffeehouse  
spoken word, poetry music, dance, etc

Taking place Dec. 5th  
multi-purpose room  
12:30-2:30

for more info, call  
the Womyn's centre @ 721-8353







# SUCK MY LEFT ONE

## rants, raves, reviews

six

## Scrappy Bitch Tour

truth first. i came to the scrappy bitch tour armed with my "saved-up-my-money-and-will-dance-all-night" ticket, excited about finally getting a chance to see kinnie starr live. who were the other two "bitches"?! beats me, i was going to see kinnie starr... so now that you know my viewpoint...into vertigo we go...the time is just past ten and the show hasn't started yet.

vertigo was all candlelit and docile with tables set up everywhere - was there to be no dancing?! - i was expecting a hurricane of comic book proportions, this looked *mellow*. i took my seat and waited. we (speaking collectively for the audience) all had our attentions eagerly sitting on our laps, wrapped up in pretty red bows, waiting...waiting...for someone to bestow this gift on...and on she came with her brand new guitar and deep enchanting voice, oh susannah took the stage and snatched up our eager attentions. more on the country side of folk she was, but her voice and lyrics won over even the most resistant of us and lulled us into the wave that was *the scrappy bitch tour*. veda hille and kinnie starr scampered up on stage and played in oh susannah's limelight for a while...actually this sort of thing happened all evening making me forget from time to time whose set it actually was.

petite intermission.

and on came the much anticipated kinnie starr. she bedazzled us with poetry and tickled us with songs, she played everywhere, all around the room, no stage could contain her...but just when i was almost swallowed up in her world, she was done her set and i was back in another intermission...shit, i just wanted to dance, that's okay, prerecorded sarah mclachlan is aligh too...so who was this veda hille person headlining the show? i had heard some fabulous rumours about her, but could she satisfy such a hungry folk music junkie?

oh veda, could you ever...

she was truly amazing, her entire stage presence was electrifying; witty lyrics and music that swept me away...ebbing and flowing and crashing in magnificent waves of ecstasy...

i had to scrape together what was left of me after the scrappy bitches were finished tickling my fancy. and i left with two veda hille cds in my bag and fulfillment resounding from deep within.

- euphoria.

@ Raves @

## Paula Cole - This Fire

I wouldn't hesitate to classify Paula Cole's *This Fire* as 'venting' music. In the CD jacket, as an after thought, it says "Play this album loud." Although a tad garish in parts, the collection of radically different tunes may jumpstart your feminist tendencies and make you dance, beat your pillow or daydream. Paula's original vocal flourishes make her distinct and separate her from "mainstream" artists such as Sarah McLaughlan and Shawn Colvin, (with whom she performed a memorable rendition of Closer to Fine with the Indigo Girls themselves at the Vancouver Lilith Fair in August.) *Tiger*, the first track, has a catchy chorus: "I've left Bethlehem and I feel free/ I've left the girl I was supposed to be." That's fun to sing when you're doing something you know your mother wouldn't approve of. "I've got a piece of my heart on the sole of my shoe" is truthful and humbling as we all have a piece of our hearts of the bottoms of someone's Doc Martens somewhere. Ms. Paula, as she hollers like a retching dog one minute and rings like a bell the next, transcends the norm to remind us all that whatever we wanna do is A-okay.

-Lisa H.

Food Not Bombs. Yay to all the people who donate food and those who volunteer their time driving, organising and cooking! to all you hungry ones, soup and yummies are served every Sunday twelve noon at Centennial Square. to volunteer call 382-1454.

Helen Smith's ceramic class (Art Ed 309) is fabulous! If you're looking for a low-stress elective and like to play in the mud, check it out. There has been a section added for next term.

How much do I love Amaranth Food-For-Thought? Well, they have a great system of ordering local organic foods and selling them for cheap. You can't lose. Check out their teeny store in SUB B132.

Since Ellen Degeneres came out, I love her show! (Wed, 9:30pm, channel 9) It's great to have T.V. that's aimed at a queer audience, not just one with gay characters for 'flavour'. I used to hate Ellen's self-deprecating jokes; now I love her relaxed confidence ... and that smooch with Paige on Oct 8! That's what I like!



## Stone Butch Blues - by Leslie Feinberg

*Stone Butch Blues* traces the story of Jess Goldberg, a he-she growing up in a working-class town in the fifties. Her childhood is surrounded by questions of identity, difference, and isolation. Growing up different, without any access to "forbidden" knowledge, Jess searches out others who are like her. Leslie Feinberg paints the portrait of a young butch coming out and growing into an acceptance of herself.

*Stone Butch Blues* is an emotional ride through lesbian history, both the violence perpetuated against lesbians, that characterized their lives, and the strength of survival, making it through as best they could. Feinberg shows us the necessity of community, as a driving force in survival.

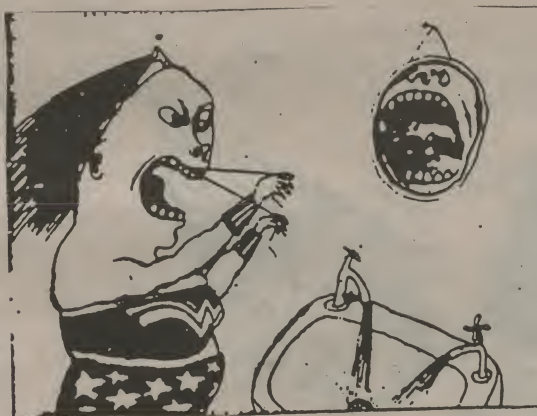
When I think of community today, I think of a network of organizations, establishments, and support services that didn't exist then. Community in the early sixties consisted largely of the one or two bars that would cater to or would tolerate lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered, and transsexuals. Feinberg shows the dissolution of this community with the advent of feminism and its critique of butch/femme.

Jesse, faced with this eroding of her identity, and her community, decides to pass as a man in order to survive.

Throughout the novel, we watch Jess as she works her way through difficult issues of difference and belonging. Feinberg's portrayal gives us incredible insight on healing oneself as a whole being. This novel portrays lesbian lives and relationships in their complexities. Feinberg illustrates how these relationships are influenced by both their socio-economic and political environments, as well as the maturation and acceptance of oneself.

*Stone Butch Blues* is an engaging and moving novel. It is no surprise that it won the 1994 Lambda Literary Award and the 1994 American Library Association Lesbian/Gay Book Award. The quality and depth of writing, in combination with an accurate historical context, and complex and intriguing characters, makes *Stone Butch Blues* a must read. I urge that it take precedent over all other books in your "to read pile." It is both stunning and electrifying, and well worth reading.

— Brenda Simmers



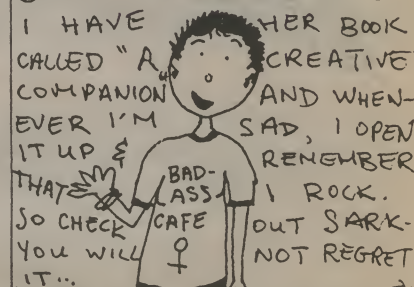
Slaveway? You have the most expensive stale bread and rotten produce on the market!

The Education Student's Association refused the offer of articles written by a gay teacher, stating that it would be too controversial for their newsletter. Call them at 721-7853 or visit their office in the curriculum lab on the 2nd floor in the MacLauren Building and tell them your views on human rights violations!

When are my legs going to be all sleek and sexy again?! My house has fleas and my ankles are just big, puffy, red welts. A note to my landlord- Suck my left one! Next time someone with a dog moves out, DEFLEA! I'm moving.

rant

OK. SO I'VE GOT SOME MORE BOOKS I THINK YOU ALL SHOULD READ. ONE WORD: SARK. SARK WRITES AMAZING, FUN, CREATIVE 'PLAY' BOOKS AND JOURNALS. I HAVE HER BOOK CALLED "A CREATIVE COMPANION" AND WHEN EVER I'M SAD, I OPEN IT UP & REMEMBER THAT I ROCK. SO CHECK OUT SARK- YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT...





## Remembering Summer

He said  
that if I peed in his pool,  
the bottom of my bathing suit would  
eat itself.  
It made me want to do it  
to see if he lied  
but I was too big for that anyway.  
I was eleven.  
I was getting to be a big girl  
and and and! I even had breasts now  
(well, almost)  
and I remember the first curls  
of dark hair I found,  
embarrassed but proud.  
I was getting to be a big girl,  
that's what he said to me  
as he swam with me in his pool  
that touched mid-summer skies.  
Swimming was the only thing to do anyway,  
besides gathering fallen cherries from the tree.  
The house was enormous and I wasn't allowed to  
touch anything.  
So I swam.  
And my uncle swam too.  
He's such a kiddie  
(that's what my mom said)  
like how he put a rock in my bathing suit bottoms  
and threw me into the deep end  
and I sunk  
and he dove in and I remember  
the moment frozen there,  
under water, he took off my bottoms  
with the rock in them  
and put a finger  
between the dark curls  
and I was embarrassed and  
needed to scream but  
water rushed into my mouth and drowned my complaints.  
I kicked my way to the surface.  
He climbed out with my bottoms, and  
stood,  
a looming silhouette in front of the sun,  
watching me  
I held out my hand for the bathing suit.  
He jeered, holding it above my head.  
I cried.  
My aunt cried, Dinner!  
He threw the bathing suit into the pool  
with the weight of the stone it sunk.  
Hurry up, he said. You're not a kid  
anymore.

- Nepeta

## Learning Imperfection

*How can it be the end when our bodies, coiled together, were so perfect, when sometimes I couldn't meet your eyes without thinking I would explode?*

Learning yoga, I discovered how to regulate my breathing, coordinate it with every fluid action. It requires a concentration most people aren't used to. "When you get it, you'll know it," the instructor said. "You'll feel serene."

The night I finally formed my not-so-flexible body into a perfect bow, I understood "serene". Balanced on my stomach, hands around my ankles, rocking gently, I felt like a perfect machine. The strength comes from breathing and floods every muscle, every limb with white light.

I still don't know how you got both arms around me, one hand pressed, palm open, between my spine and the mattress. Something happened in that instant - you became more than my lover. I couldn't tell which part was me. *I slid a finger into your mouth, said "You can bite me, it's okay." I was scared, needed to know who was who...*

When I was nine years old, I learned a perfect backstroke. Arms come up clean, nearly brushing the ears, pinkies enter the water first, right arm, left arm, perfect rhythm.

The body curves like a banana, hips tilted, forehead dipped back so the water laps at the hairline. The stroke is a trick of perfect balance, a movement equally natural and strange.

Backstroke showed me, for the first time, how the parts of my body could work together. I moved through the pool imagining fins and gills, watching the rafters in the ceiling to keep myself straight.

"Things are moving way too fast," you said. Not fast like a racecar or a rollercoaster or the skateboards that rumble down my hill at night. Fast like a diver, beautiful and wise as she hangs in the air. A swimmer after years of competing. Exhilaration, with a streaming satisfaction afterward. *Did that scare you? I was scared, too.* It's not supposed to be that easy, not right away. I worked for weeks to reach back and grasp my ankles, swam length after length thinking "less splash, more tilt," trying to imagine my arms as a propeller.

*Your head on my chest, eyes closed, trusting breath regular over my skin.* This is what I am missing, what I have learned from you, what I don't understand. It was never perfection, never that mechanical. There is nothing I can practise or repeat.

- Mona Q.

## Bad wisdom

*Mother the doctor knows something is wrong  
cause my body has strange information.  
He's looked in my eyes and knows I'm not a child,  
but he doesn't dare ask the right question.*

Her face is weary and her eyes have lost the trust and idealism of childhood. So young, yet she seems to understand so much. Her gaze shifts, alert and wary. She has seen evil. No. This can't be possible; she's too young. Maybe she saw something on TV that disturbed her. She could just be moody. We all have to grow up sometime, besides, I'm sure she would tell me if there was something wrong. Better to let it blow over. If there is something up she'll forget about it.

*Mother my friends are no longer my friends  
and the games we once played have no meaning.  
I've gone serious and shy and they can't figure why,  
so they've left me to my own daydreaming.*

What's wrong with her? She never laughs at our jokes, like she thinks she's smarter and more mature than everyone else. She's so conceited. You can't say anything to her; she takes everything too seriously. She's always so touchy. Even if you tell her she's pretty she freaks out. No wonder the boys hate her - she'll never get a date.

*What price to pay for bad wisdom? What price to pay for bad wisdom?  
Too young to know too much too soon, bad wisdom.  
Bad Wisdom*

I'm a loser, that's why he does it. Is this how all brothers and sisters play? Then why do I get so scared? I deserve it anyway; I can't even stand up to him. I'm a fucking chicken.

*Mother you've taught me the laws are so fine;  
If I'm good then I will be protected.  
I've fallen through the cracks and there's no getting back; -  
Now I'll never trust whoever gets elected.*

An accused sexual offender received a lighter sentence than expected today. The judge ruled that the two-year-old girl that the man raped was enticing him to sexual actions by her suggestive remarks. A Canadian judge shows mercy to a known sexual offender, publicly thanking him for sparing the virginity of the 12-year-old girl he molested.

*Mother your eyes have gone suddenly cold  
and it wasn't what I was expecting.  
Once I did think that I'd find comfort there  
and instead you've gone hard and suspecting.*

What an attitude she's got lately. Acting up and talking about suicide. She's not serious, of course, but what a way to treat her mother. She probably got into some trouble and is feeling sorry for herself. Well we all have to grow up sometime and I guess she was too bloody curious. Little slut.

*Mother I'm cut at the root like a weed  
cause there's no one to hear my small story.  
Just like a woman who walks in the street  
I will pay for my life with my body.*

Raped eh? That's shitty; he could at least have taken her out to dinner first. She should have said something; I don't buy that I-was-too-scared crap. A pretty young girl walking alone at night? She was asking for it.

*What price to pay for bad wisdom? What price to pay for bad wisdom?  
Too young to know too much too soon, bad wisdom.  
Bad Wisdom*

**Italicised lyrics - Suzanne Vega**  
**The rest - Mary Conquest**



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## Kiwi

Welcome  
to my kiwi.  
See where it  
shares with the eyes?  
The curvature of the skin follows  
thin, sweet lines,  
all craving  
taste of  
growth of  
brush of lips across hair  
drawn out through  
green strings that hit  
the back  
of your throat  
like another's breath.

-Michelle Deines

## Zapote

*Split open under knife and grip  
it sits on the table*

*He carves into it with his finger  
brings a piece up to her lips*

*Zapote, he says  
and she repeats this twice,*

*tastes the word  
before opening herself to the fruit.*

*She sucks the flavour from the grainy-soft flesh,*

*thinks, this is what sunrise in the jungle would taste like  
could I only lick the sky.*

*In Mexico, he says,  
poets use this fruit to describe a woman's vagina.*

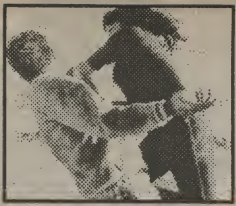
*The shiny brown pit  
has its own little clit*

*and the flesh itself, salmon soft pink  
could be labia majora.*

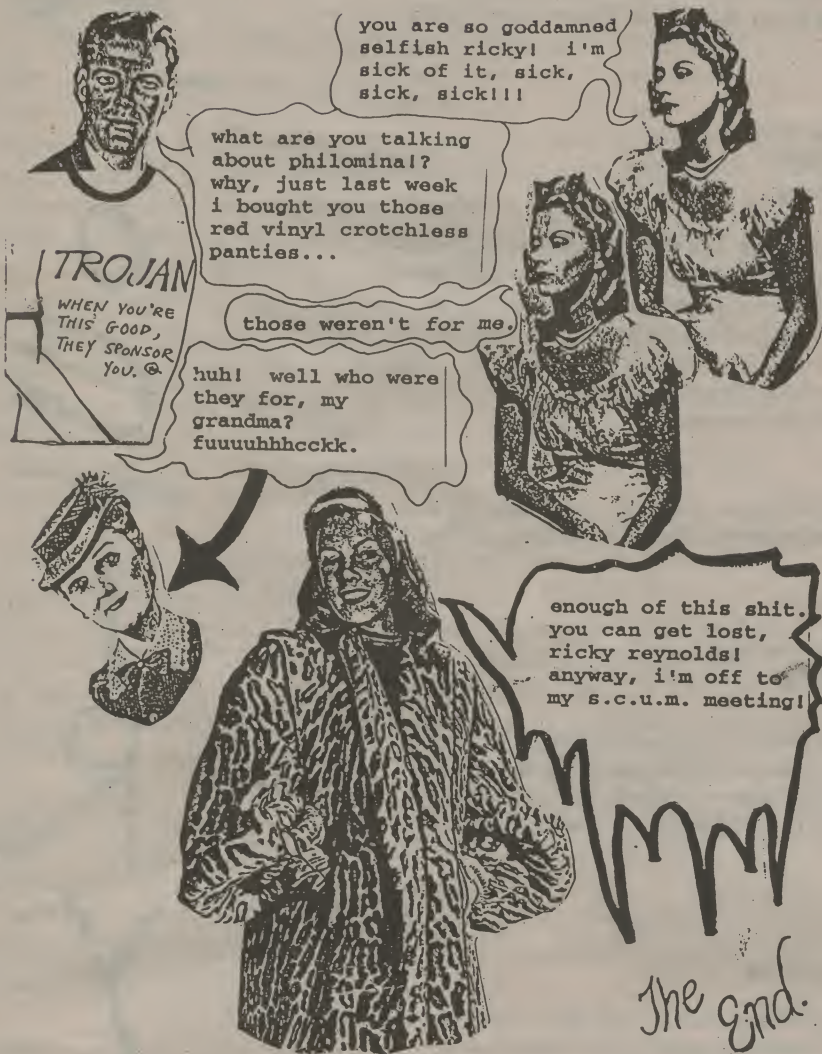
*She sees this, feels this, asks,  
How would you know?*

Nadine Pedersen

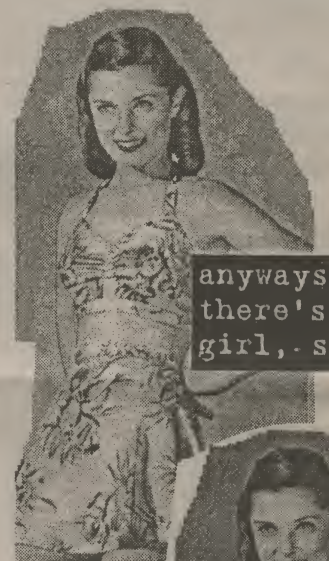




crushes are like  
their name  
by lyndsay



so, like, i had a crush on this boy, see. my poor heart would shudder with adrenaline each time i saw this miserable lout, and it would send me into this weakling passive, non-smart state. so i decided to think about this stupid crush phenomenon. it's usually girls having big crushes on boys which creates an already socially perpetuated hierarchy and i realized it was happening to me which pissed me off so i dumped my crush and said FUCK YOU i am a woman i am strong and if this boy is gonna fuck with my mind then i will stop because i do not like feeling all shy and insecure just because of a stupid boy?!!....



anyways, so there's this girl, see...



# THE Story of THE MONTH QUARTERLY

So I'm innocently gift shopping at one of the local malls when a sudden anxiety instigated by sensations of monthly flow interrupts my desire to browse & instead i make for the public john. It's fairly quiet there. A couple of women are washing up & heading out but i head to the second-last stall of a dozen for an extra bit of privacy. As i begin my business the main door opens, closes and all voices subside leaving me with complete personal comfort & freedom. Alone? or am i? For a momentary fear that i am being watched... violated, shakes my subconsciousness compelling me to seek out reassurance by doing an under-the-cubicle-scan-4 feet... Nobody. Peacefully... i finish what needs 2 b done & flush, unlock, wash, dry & check my face. i decide to apply a layer of lipstick before i unite with the mob of shoppers beyond the bathroom door. All is quiet... suddenly i hear movement as the door of the last cubicle unlocks, a pair of hard-soled shoes steps off the rim of the toilet, & from the cubicle-depths emerges... a man! For a second we are two deer caught in each other's headlights, stripped from all sense of dignity i can do nothing but watch as he runs past me... in a silent frenzy

what i really think...

